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RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK IMMEDIATE
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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 001179

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TAGS: [PTER](#) [MOPS](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [TU](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: IS THE PKK CEASEFIRE ABOUT TO END?

Classified By: DCM Nancy McEldowney for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (S/NF) Summary: There is increasing speculation that the PKK's unilateral ceasefire, which it declared in October 2006 and has somewhat observed, may end as soon as May 18. Even after declaring the ceasefire -- on jailed leader Abdullah Ocalan's instructions -- the PKK publicly warned that it would end in the spring absent GOT action to improve conditions in the southeast. With significant Turkish counterinsurgency operations underway since early April -- and GOT leaders taking a hard line on terrorism in the current highly-charged political environment -- there seems to be little incentive for the PKK to maintain the ceasefire.

Increased PKK violence would add pressure on the Erdogan government to approve a cross-border operation into northern Iraq. End summary.

Efforts to Maintain Ceasefire Continue...

12. (S/NF) The PUK's Ankara Representative, Bahros Galali, told us May 16 that he and pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party (DTP) leader Ahmet Turk recently met Iraqi President Talabani in Suleimaniyah, who agreed to prevail upon the PKK to maintain the ceasefire. Turk requested to meet (secretly) with the PKK's leader in northern Iraq, Murat Karayilan, but was only able to send a message through intermediaries. Galali reported that tensions are high over the ceasefire issue between Karayilan and the other senior PKK leader, Cemil Bayik, who wants to maintain it. Galali is concerned that the Turkish military will use casualties at the hands of the PKK to goad PM Erdogan into approving a cross-border operation.

13. (S/NF) Orhan Miroglu, DTP's Vice President for International Relations, told us May 16 that the cease fire had de facto ended due to the military's provocative actions in the southeast. Despite this, DTP is still pushing for continuation of the ceasefire. Ocalan's attorneys meet with him each Wednesday, and will probably get word from him today on his wishes. There is a chance Ocalan will extend the cease fire due to the drawn-out elections process. The May 18 date was chosen as an arbitrary date after the presidential elections should have been over. DTP is hopeful Ocalan will order the cease fire be held in place.

...Even as Military Steps Up Ops in the Southeast

14. (S) The GOT -- especially the military -- has never acknowledged the PKK's ceasefire ("nations declare ceasefires, not terrorists"), and would likely ignore or treat with disdain any PKK announcement that it is over. In contrast to previous years, and despite the unilateral PKK ceasefire, the military did not curtail counter-PKK operations during the winter but rather kept up a steady operational tempo aimed at rooting the terrorists out of their winter camps in southeast Turkey and keeping the organization on the defensive. In March, the military deployed additional troops to the region to prepare for an expected PKK spring offensive. In April, the military increased the pressure, losing 10 troops in significant clashes with the terrorists on April 8 and 9. In early May, following the loss of four troops in a five day period in Sirnak province, the press reported the deployment of 20,000 additional troops and air support to Sirnak as part of "Operation Sledgehammer."

15. (S) During a May 9 visit to the Second Army Command headquarters in Malatya, Land Forces Commander GEN Basbug said the military would continue the operations "until the outlawed PKK is totally destroyed." Our military contacts acknowledge the on-going military offensive and express optimism that it will be successful.

The Key Word is "Pressure"

16. (S/NF) Some Kurdish contacts describe increasing military pressure in some parts of the southeast. One told us that residents in the Turkey-Iraq border town of Cukurca (in Hakkari province) are so frightened of the military's presence that they are essentially locked down. Another contact, from the DTP, spoke of 10,000 soldiers with air support going after a band of 20 PKKers in Tunceli province. He accused the military of returning the bodies of dead PKK terrorists to their families without fingers and ears; this only increases tensions, he asserted. While these claims are difficult to substantiate, the fact that they are making the rounds in the region is significant.

17. (S) An end to the ceasefire would mean renewed attacks on Turkish security forces in the southeast and perhaps bombings in western and southern cities, including against tourist sites. Public calls for a cross-border operation into northern Iraq to take out PKK camps would also increase. In a highly-charged political climate on the eve of elections, this could spell real trouble.

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